

First shipment of tariff-free wheat from U.S. arrives in Vietnam

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

HO CHI MINH CITY — Vietnam has received its first shipment of U.S. wheat after the southeast Asian nation eliminated its 3% import tariff.

The shipment arrived Feb. 6 at Ho Chi Minh City carrying more than 68,350 metric tons of soft white and hard red spring wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest and the Northern Plains.

“It’s certainly significant because of the reduction in the cost of U.S. wheat mov-

ing into Vietnam,” said Steve Mercer, vice president of communications for U.S. Wheat Associates. “With prices generally high, if you can reduce the landed cost of imported wheat by even 3%, it matters, it really does.”

U.S. Wheat is the overseas marketing arm for the industry. Soft white wheat is particularly popular in Vietnam, Mercer said in a press statement.

Last year, Vietnam purchased 157,000 metric tons of white wheat, said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission.

“Tremendous news,”



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

A bulk vessel loaded with more than 68,000 metric tons of U.S. wheat purchased by Vietnamese flour millers. The Vietnam government has eliminated a 3% U.S. wheat import tariff.

Squires said. “The lowering of the tariff is a great sign for increased movement of U.S. wheat, Pacific Northwest

wheat into Vietnam.”

“With the import tariff reduced to zero, the Vietnamese buyer saved almost \$1 million on this vessel load of U.S. wheat alone,” Robert Hanson, agricultural counselor for USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, based in Hanoi, said. “We thank the Vietnam government for ending the tariff, a decision that will hold the line on food costs and help make U.S. wheat more competitive in Vietnam’s growing market.”

It’s not certain when additional shipments might occur, Mercer said.

“Does this mean it’s going to happen again? We couldn’t possibly say,” he said.

U.S. wheat exports are behind this year both in Vietnam and overall, Mercer said, due to higher prices caused by the short crop that was a result of the drought.

Vietnam imports an average of about 4 million metric

tons of wheat per year. Australia and Canada are large wheat suppliers to Vietnam and had duty-free access to Vietnam for many years under regional trade agreements.

Vietnam first reduced the U.S. wheat import tariff from 5% to 3% in July 2020. Talks continued until Vietnam published the final decree, and USDA and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced in November 2021 that the tariff would be eliminated.

Even with the tariff, Vietnamese millers had doubled the volume of U.S. wheat to more than 520,000 metric tons between 2015 and 2021.

In addition to soft white and hard red spring wheat, Vietnam imported U.S. hard red winter and soft red winter wheat in 2021. That returned about \$130 million to U.S. farmers and the wheat supply industry, according to U.S. Wheat.

Idaho legislators consider protections for agricultural aircraft

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

BOISE — Agricultural aircraft would be protected from most nuisance lawsuits under a bill in the Idaho Legislature.

House Bill 606 would amend the state’s Right to Farm Act to include aerial applicators. It would add “the ingress and egress of agricultural aircraft to agricultural lands or treatment areas” to the list of covered activities.

Its purpose statement says agricultural aircraft must travel to and from agricultural lands and treatment areas to perform vital functions — and a growing agricultural-urban interface means “it is important to recognize and protect the

ability for agricultural aircraft to access agricultural lands.”

HB 606 would not relieve pilots from Federal Aviation Administration regulations related to low flying and congested areas. State and federal pesticide application and environmental compliance standards would not change.

David Lehman, executive director of the approximately 40-member Idaho Agricultural Aviation Association, said the proposal protects ingress and egress on agricultural land and certain federal land where pilots are working. It also codifies that flying airplanes or helicopters is an allowed agricultural use.

“The issue that has come up in the last number of years is increasing conflict with the urban-agricultural interface,” he said. “There are more and more issues getting in and out of treatment areas.”

For example, a Filer man in 2013 was charged with firing at a shotgun at an aerial applicator. Lehman said the number of complaints about ag-related flying has increased.

George Parker, who owns an agricultural aviation business in south-central Idaho, told the House Agricultural Affairs Committee Feb. 22 that he sometimes gets four complaints a week compared to about four per summer when the area was not growing as quickly.

Some people will complain frequently, he said. He often contacts flight standards officials or a sheriff’s office before flying.

“People are moving here for the lifestyle,” Lehman said. “But it also means they have to have a good understanding of the rural economy as well and expect agricultural activities taking place in those areas.”

He expects substantial growth over the next decade, including more urbanization.

“We’re going to have to have another evolution of how agriculture and urban (uses) interact with each other, and it should be to protect a vital part of our economy,” Lehman said.

The committee Feb. 22 voted to send HB 606 to the full House with a do-pass recommendation.

One concern was whether it provides sufficient protection. Lehman and bill sponsor Rep. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, said it does in combination with existing state law.

The Right to Farm law states that farming is a natural right and recognizes it as a permitted use. It allows transporting agricultural products to or from an ag facility. It also permits “noise, odors, dust, fumes, light and other conditions associated with an agricultural operation or an agricultural facility.”

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